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ABSTRACT

The hidden curriculum is that set of intentional outcomes from schooling not formally recognized or written. Although not perceived by educators as a measurable construct, the hidden curriculum has been a significant underlying caretaker of culture. Changes in the hidden curriculum can occur more quickly than changes in the formal curriculum, which are slowed down by mandates. Homogeneous grouping, tracking, maintains the destruction of equalized learning and reinforces the perpetuation of unequal opportunity and socialization within the classroom. Empirical evidence does not support the traditional belief that tracking benefits both high- and low-level students and that teaching homogenous groups is easier. Historically, the demand for efficiency was the primary initiator of active tracking. Reliance on standardized testing to evaluate student achievement has supported the belief that homogeneous grouping is more efficient. To the extent that homogeneous grouping reinforces prejudices on the part of teachers in their relations with students, it is an impediment to the trust that students need to have in their teachers in order for student learning to be maximized. (IAH)

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Curriculum, Tracking, and Trust: Cause and Effect of Society's Imbalance

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With the publication of the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education in the spring of 1983, and the near-simultaneous appearance of several other critical studies, school reform suddenly rose to the top of the domestic policy agenda (Ravitch, 1985). The remedies under discussion differ with: (1) the teacher focused on increased incentives for talented individuals, and (2) the curriculum issue focused on increased high school requirements. The curriculum issue is less concerned with how much money is spent, than the concern for resolving conflicts among deeply held attitudes about education. The struggle over the "right" curriculum for schools has been nearly continuous ever since there was a significant number of public schools (Ravitch, 1985).

Curriculum has traditionally been defined as the set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes transferred from one generation to the next in order to transmit and maintain the dominant culture or condition of society. Hidden curriculum is that set of intentional outcomes from schooling which are not formally recognized or written. The unofficial instructional influences which may either support or weaken the attainment of goals are all part of the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum has not traditionally been perceived by educators as a measurable construct, yet has maintained the effectiveness of being a significant underlying caretaker of culture, in respect to the formal curriculum.

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Today's current trends for effective schooling illustrates the need to incorporate a positive model of the world in general. Children must be affectively intervened by educators to incorporate the realities of what it will take to make change happen within a positive mode. Otherwise, educators will continue to humor the belief that positive change will occur naturally with time. Again, the hidden curriculum would be used to hide what is really going on (Apple, 1979).

No one ever looks at the world with pristine vision. We see it edited by a definite set of customs, institutions and ways of thinking. Hidden curriculum maintains this productive editing. Interception requires refocusing the educators and the philosophy of education to encompass methods which promote affirmative conflict. Although it is well known that conflict produces change, or at least the recognition that change could occur, education is not humanly driven to meet this need quickly. Individual adjustment to social, political, and economic order should be encouraged, as we move farther from the stability of an industrial society into a society which demands the ability to seek information, process it, accept it, and go on.

The notion that students need to struggle individually and collectively for society is a sound one. After all, school is the place to deal with society on a gradual level. As schools are value-based, it seems necessary to change the values (Giroux, 1988). Hidden curriculum may be one of the few immediate ways to focus on educational change at the social level.

Relating the little world of the classroom to the big picture of life will require abandonment of neutral opinion and intervention at a level beyond the formal curriculum. Hidden curriculum change can feasibly occur much quicker than formal changes of curriculum which are slowed down by mandates.

Jean Anyon (1981) argues that schools help to reproduce the existing society by giving students from various socieconomic classes different types of curricular knowledge and educational experiences. There is a "hidden curriculum" which prepares students from different social classes for class-specific roles in the society. Anyon stresses, the hidden curriculum helps to reproduce a system of relationships in society which produce an unequal structure of economic relations. It is apparent that curriculum is a driving force in the maintenance of an inequitable society.

Paulo Freire (1981) indicates that there exists an underlying objective to preserve the relationship which education can generate to bridge students with reality. Education is an activity which produces controversial issues amongst those who believe in the freedom which it generates. The idea that literacy is not a neutral condition for the learner, proposes that an increase in creativity allows for the critical participation necessary during a time of social transition. As people become new individuals in their acquisition of education, such people also become freer to generate this education into actions which may produce significant modification for their entire culture.

Jeannie Oakes identifies tracking as a way to "sort out" students, generally based on ability or achievement. Tracking may allow students freedom to direct their lives by choosing their own course levels. However, at the point when this decision-making occurs, the sorting has already been established by predirected conditioning within the school system and by hidden curriculum within the classroom. Because of being grouped under certain conditions, students personally are identified and labelled according to expected learning styles of each grouping and as a result, school is not the same experience for all students. Oakes attempts to explain how, by attempting to create an equalizing system in schools, we have in fact destroyed the condition. Homogeneous groups, thought of as the conditions where students learn best, are actually maintaining the destruction of equalized learning and reinforcing the perpetuation of unequal opportunity and socialization within the classroom.

Tracking students has traditionally been thought of as the best thing to do. Why? Perhaps because there was no reason to perceive it as wrong, at least by the dominant culture. Additionally, it is not the dominant culture, solely, which perpetuates tracking. There has simply existed a consistent rule upheld across the land that students should be put in groups. So why is Oakes questioning this practice?

The existance of common beliefs has hindered the escape from grouping and tracking. Beliefs that homogeneous groups help both high and low level students and that teaching homogeneous groups is easier has not been found to be consistently true. In the recent past,

no study has found homogeneous grouping to be of consistent benefit to students. The finding which indicates that bright students are not held back when in heterogeneous classrooms should come as quite a shock to many teachers, as this goes against the grain of what has traditionally been perceived.

Overall support for students learning better in homogeneous groups is not available empirically. Tracking students, at the lower end fosters negative self-perceptions, while those in the high track may have an overly positive or unrealistic view of others because of their "upper echelon" placement. Oakes (1985) points out that the negative or positive attitudes are there primarily because of the tracking situation itself, not due to the natural expectations of children.

Since testing results are the prime determinant for tracking, Oakes suggests thorough reconsideration of what the tests are actually assessing and revealing. The items which make up standardized tests can not guarantee that they are the best determinants for measuring aptitude/achievement. Additionally, she relates this to the self-fulfilling prophecy of the normal curve. The majority of students are capable of mastering course material under appropriate instructional conditions. However, we continue to maintain large educational differences to reflect a normal curve. Oakes questions why we so quickly accept this transfer and why does it unappropriately remain with educational processes? Is it because it allows for grouping--and we think grouping is good?

The lack of "culture fair" tests and testing procedures adds to the unfairness. Counselor and teacher recommendations, often

influenced by race, class, dress, speech patterns, and behaviors do not promote a fair or equitable evaluation. Student and/or parent choice regarding tracking does not truly exist as a free choice, since the previously decribed factors often undermine that condition. Oakes impresses the fact that homogeneous grouping, simply existing to make a teacher's job easier, is by no means significant enough to direct the outcomes of so many individual educations.

Oakes (1985) points out that it is the *traditionalist* condition of tracking that keeps it within the schools, used as a tool. However, this tool is archaic and needs to be put aside. Historically, schools started out homogeneous. Those students who attended school typically were of the same general background and condition. Little interest was made to actively alter this situation. As a result, even though compulsory, the classroom continued to remain primarily homogeneous.

The demand for efficiency was the primary initiator of active tracking. The need for consistent prepatory curriculum and college entrance requirements led to the desire to separate those students who were college bound from those students who were not.

At the turn of the century, with the explosive increase in population due to immigration, the public school was at the least concerned with preparing every student in the same manner. Those students who needed to be taught simple life skills for surviving in America were certainly taught differently from those students who fell into the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant image. Curriculum differentiation and tracking became the norm. As everyone wanted something different from the schools, this was the only way to

manage it. Gone were the ideals of the equal education for each student, replaced by the ideals to serve the public's interest even if it meant treating different children differently.

As Social Darwinism became prevalent during the 1920's, the condition of the poor was taken to be that which the poor deserved. The conditions which they harbored were believed to be those of which they were fit. In order for the poor to render themselves fit for a higher echelon in society, more than an education would be necessary. The additional factor of time would be required for them to evolve in the mindset which would enable them to make the most of opportunity. As added by writers such as G. S. Hall, it was believed to be far better to concern the schools with socializing the immigrant population into the society rather than expand their intellectual abilities which were already believed by the WASP echelon to be inferior in capability. Hope and fear drove the American public school system at the turn of the century.

As the industrial world of the 1930's was affected by the Taylor Method of scientific management, so were the school administrators. To maintain efficiency was of high priority. Differentiated educational programs which further separated students into homogeneous groupings increased as the need to produce the most quantitatively educated for the least amount of money. Qualitative concerns were set aside as the struggle to produce the product provided the hope and fear. Hope to give all students an education was combined with fear that good Americans citizens were not being produced. Obviously, being a good American citizen was prioritized over being an intelligent American citizen.

Vocational education was seen as the way to accommodate the differentiated curriculum of those who were not college bound. Vocational eduation, learning by doing, was originally thought of as a necessity for all students. However, in order to meet the needs to socialize and better prepare the masses to serve the requirements of industrial jobs, vocational education was the most effective way to reach this goal. Efficiently preparing students to work in industry and in farming , using newly learned efficient methods and ideals, was what the public wanted for a better America.

School is without a doubt a primary agent of socialization. Philosophies purport that the curriculum and its usage is maintaining the development of each child individually as a critical thinker and produces responsible participants in the democratic process (Penna, 1981). We already know that what we have been doing in the classroom as educators has not fully generated a more democratic culture. Traditionaliy, educators have focused on transferring the dominant culture from one generation to the next. The logical thing to do when something does not work is to attempt some other alternative.

I am not convinced that there is a conscious level of upper class white men, united as one, who are determined to keep the better attributes of other culture groups away from them, in some sort of territorially-bonded psyche. The notion of schools connecting curriculum with justice is going to require a redefinition of the school's mission to develop young people to improve the society (Giroux, 1981). Improving society is no longer solely an issue of economics. Schools can not provide a neutral education, so

educators must attempt to avoid rejustifying the powerless condition of the student and choose a position to take.

As miscommunication continues, the relationship between teacher/students continues to digress. Unfortunately the academic success of the student gets caught in the battle. Failure, as described by McDermott (1974) is sought out by both, teacher and student in each one's own determined ways. Interaction and feedback from the teacher produces additional political activity within the classroom amongst students.

Social organization is described as a cognitive phenomenon made by people "knowing approximately what to do in certain situations." Individual teachers and students attend to some aspects of the social world before others, while some aspects are not tended to at all. Students take sides politically by attending or not attending to the teacher/work in the class (McDermott, 1974). Those who attend gain information transfer and learn, while those who do not attend do not learn.

The politics within classrooms exists so strongly in the communication of the classroom that a teacher does not have to be racist to produce the rigid separation and/or lack of trust between teacher and students. Communication differences between teacher and students result in the teacher settling into an authoritative role of instruction. Students reject this interaction and as a result learning suffers. Even if dialect does not prevent children from understanding the teacher, it can prevent teachers unfamiliar with it from responding constructively to the children (Sleeter and Grant, 1988).

Distrust produced in the classroom by actions or lack of actions by the teacher induces the resulting response of each child in either a perceived positive or negative outcome. In order for this course of action to be alleviated there must exist an understanding at the level of the teacher that the situtuation exists. Teachers must understand what they are doing, whether directly or indirectly, to set students into a mode of rebellion towards successful communication with the teacher. Whether this occurs and is corrected for is ultimately up to the teacher.

Successful social relations are identified as a direct predictor of task mastery in the classroom (McDermott, 1977). The relationship between student and teacher exists as the cornerstone for learning to take place. Students and teachers identifying or comprehending the attitudes of each other is oriented by McDermott (1977) as the "trust" necessary for intellectual engagement to take place.

McDermott (1977) implies that trust is a constant, ongoing process rather than a mutually exclusive entity. Continual renewal of trust requires a conscious effort by all involved-->teachers, students, administrators. Trust exists as a conditional requirement for learning. Organization and communication are additionally identified as correlating more effective learning environments. As students and teachers perceive the organizational traits of each other, a comfortable level of prediction is identified as to what is expected from each other.

McDermott (1977) suggests that student's trust in a teacher's coercion may well be recognized by students to be in their best

interest. Invariably, the students must be convinced that the teacher knows best. Teachers must remind themselves that mutual understanding is just that--mutual. Whether coercion is direct or indirect, the effect should be the same, otherwise, trust has not been established, time is wasted, and learning is impeded.

Identifying methods to establish trust is not an easy task for researchers or teachers. Normally, a teacher is going to attempt to find a way that works. The degree to which the method works to promote a level of trust is directly related to how much accountability a teacher chooses to direct towards a student. Sustaining the effectiveness of relationships with students is an ongoing process which a teacher must choose to maintain. "Trust" is not often found in curricular rationals or mission statements. However, trust must be managed as it is directly task-oriented and task-reflective.

The condition of tracking apparently exists due to the lack of education on the part of both educators and administrators, or simply the unwillingness to change. The motivation to educate those students who are not interested in a "full" curriculum is necessary. The conceptual problems of tracking probably exists more as a result of strong historical ties rather than a drive to keep groups separated from each other as a whole. Probably more educators are guilty of good intentions placed in the wrong direction, that of homogeneous grouping, rather than of being uneducated. Once again, misguided processes result in misguided products.

By identifying adaptions made by teachers to relate to students, those which result in trust could possibly be analyzed

with regard to student type, age, gender, ethnic background, and subject context. McDermott (1977) uses the phrase "relational battle" to identify hindrances to learning with regard to a preoccupation with mistrust. Such battles are identified as occurring more often in minority children/teacher relations. If a child perceives a personal trait as a barrier by a teacher, more time is often invested in rebelliously maintaining that barrier rather than learning. As a result, the teacher is setting a student up to fail. A destructive condition is created and maintained by both sides.

Regressive behavior oriented by way of a relational struggle is not a one-way battle. Teachers should show students how to relate rather than take part in the battle. Ways to effectively relate are a function of expectation. Ideally, expectations must be maximized.

Philosophically, the goal of curriculum is to develop curricula which will come to seem less and less radical because it promotes change and deepening of people's understanding rather than ending up in some radical frontier. Prevailing definitions have to be pushed and pushed to expose their contradictions, not ignored. "Effective reform today will require reassessment of some cherished convictions about the possibility of finding a one best system, about insulating the school from community influence, and about the irrelevance of ethnic differences," (Tyack, 1974). Teachers must take an active part in curriculum development and facilitation for meaningful change to occur.

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